

## **JESUS KNOWS IF FAITH IS SAVING**

John 2: 23-25 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

“O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the earth! You have set Your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, You have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.” Lord, as David said it so well in Psalm 8:1-2, do it for us again this morning. Magnify Your glory by using one of Your weakest instruments. Use the foolishness of preaching to prove John 1:14/16 is true, as John testified, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth...And from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.” Father, we are looking today at a passage of Your Word that is unsettling and if we honestly examine Your Word, it can almost take our breath away, as You are speaking about a kind of believing that is not a faith that is saving. Open our hearts today to hear, to receive, to examine each of our hearts, and let no one leave here today without saving faith. For we pray in Jesus’ precious Name, Amen.

After cleansing the temple at His first Passover, when Jesus began His public ministry, He did not leave Jerusalem in fear of the Jewish authorities. No, we read in our text in John 2: 23, “Now when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in His Name, when they saw the signs that He was doing. Don’t misunderstand John’s purpose in writing His Gospel. We read it last Sunday. Let’s read it again in John 20:30-31. We read, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book; (they would include these other signs John spoke of in John 2: 23 that happened after the temple cleansing), but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

We read that John the Baptist bore witness of Jesus, John 1:7, “that all might believe through Him.” John testified in John 1:11,12, “He came unto His own, and His own, His own people received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become sons of God, even to those who believed in His Name.” We read after the miracle of turning the water to wine, in John 2:11, “This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory. And His disciples believed in Him.” After the cleansing of the temple, Jesus spoke of “His temple” as this temple to be destroyed, crucified, buried, and He gave the sign that in three days, he would restore that temple in His resurrection. John adds in John 2:22, “When therefore, Jesus was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the Word Jesus had spoken.” Jesus’ purpose is to show us His glory so we will believe.

Why would God lead me not to include this text today in last Sunday’s message as part of the conclusion to Jesus’ cleansing of the temple? We read in John 2:23, “Now when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast (where He just had finished cleansing the temple), many believed in His Name, when they saw the signs that He was doing.” Isn’t this wonderful?! It should have been, but let’s read on. We read, “But Jesus on His part did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew all people, and needed no one to bear witness about man, for He Himself knew what was in man.” What John says here catches us off-guard. It is shocking, unsettling, alarming, troublesome, distressing, and difficult to read, and more difficult to ponder and meditate upon. What Jesus saw and what He still sees in the hearts of some believers is that they don’t really believe or have saving faith.

You may ask, “What is saving faith?” Augustine defined saving faith as believing what we do not see which is rewarded by seeing what we believe. John Wesley defined saving faith as taking God at His Word. Some define saving faith with the acrostic of faith—For all I trust Him.” Some have defined saving faith as trusting God’s reason when our reason runs out. The author of Hebrews in Hebrews 11:1 defines real saving faith, saying, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Saving faith is not just believing. James 2:19 tells us, “Even the demons believe—and shudder!” They tremble at the presence of Jesus, and they fear His spoken Name. A non-saving faith is a sense of knowing about Jesus, but which is not believing in the sense of commitment to Jesus. Jesus’s ability to know every heart perfectly leads to the unsettling truth that some belief is not the kind of belief that obtains fellowship with Jesus and eternal life.

These Passover Feast believers, many of them we read, accepted that Jesus was a great prophet, maybe some even thought He was Messiah. But they did not commit themselves to Jesus, surrender their lives to Him and begin to follow Him as His disciples. Not all faith is saving faith. Not all believing is commitment to Jesus. Pastor Larry read it clearly in Jesus’ Words in John 6:63-65, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were, who did not believe, and who it was who would betray Him. And He said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

John is teaching us today about Jesus’ glory, the glory of His omniscience (His all-knowingness. John is giving us three certainties about God’s glory and omniscience. First, God’s knows everything about you and me; we have no secrets to Him. Secondly, God knows which kind of believing He will never accept and entrust Himself to such believers. Thirdly, God knows which ones of us do and do not have saving faith.

**GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING; WE HAVE NO SECRETS.** (I.) Look at our text in John 2:24-25. We read here about God’s glory, “He knew all people, and needed no one to bear witness about man, for He Himself knew what was in man.” What a sweeping statement of God’s glory John makes, that Jesus knows all people. Don’t try to hide anything from Jesus because He knows all about our private life. He knows the sins we have kept hidden from public view. He knows the conversation games we play to gain and keep control of people or to keep control of our conversations. That’s true for us all. Not just the heart of Judas was open to Jesus, but the heart of you, each of you, and me, are front and center in Jesus all-knowingness. We each have hidden parts of us, because no two people, even if married for seventy-five years, know everything about each other. But Jesus knows. That’s His glory. The One who matters the most, knows the most. He knows our secret plans of plotting revenge. He knows our thoughts before we think them, our words before we say them, our actions before we do them, and what is under every mask we wear. We are all unmasked with Jesus. Hebrews 4: 13 is startling. We read, “And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.”

He knows if we are planning to gossip before the words leave our mouth. He knows if we are going to take His name in vain before we speak. He knows if we are going to blow up in anger and the cause of our blow up before the occasion arises. He knows who we are holding a grudge against. He knows who we are holding at arms’ length and whom we do not care to see or be in their presence. He knows each of us so deeply that in His love and

compassion and glory, He grieves for those of us who secretly have listened to the enemy who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. He knows, even in this sanctuary, that some of us in this past year have considered secret plans to take our own lives and leave our family to pick up all the shattered pieces. He knows the bitter grudges and hatred we secretly mask from public view. Nothing is hidden from him. Jesus said in Matthew 12:36 that we will one day give an account for every idle word. Hiding behind a fake profile will not keep the judgment of God from happening. David said it well in Psalm 139:1-6, "O Lord, You have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down, and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path, and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold. O Lord, You know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it."

There is not the slightest part of your heart or mine that is unknown to Jesus at this hour, this moment, at this nano-second. You look at me and I look at you and neither of us can hide what we are really feeling about each other from God. Jesus sees totally through you and me. It's His glory to know us. God knows all about us when we are in trouble. He is there to understand us when no one else really understands us. He understands our longings, our nature, our deepest thoughts, and feelings, and even our deepest motives. God knows all of the knowing and feeling and willing and doing of our lives. Jesus said in John 16:27-30, "For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father; and (I) have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father." His disciples said, "Ah, now You are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! Now we know that You know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that You came from God." What all knowing glory Jesus has!!! John said here in our text, in John 2:25, "(He) needed no one to bear witness about man, for He Himself knew what was in man." Oh, the glory of God's omniscience and all-knowingness!

You remember Peter told Jesus, after the resurrection, in John 21: 15-17, "You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus proved to Peter that when we belong to Him and are following Him in saving faith, we always have someone who loves us, knows us absolutely and fully, and for those of us who have saving faith in Jesus, Jesus has a special relationship of covenant love with each of us who trust Him. And yet, even if you are here today and you say, "I wish Jesus loved me," I testify to you that soon we will be preaching from John 3:16. There, the truth is out. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Whoever believes in Jesus and the glory of who our Savior is, and all He knows, that saving faith is more than believing in signs and wonders as these Passover Feast believers did. This is the first certainty of John in our text. John is teaching us the certainty of the glory of Jesus' omniscience and all-knowingness. Oh, how this knowledge in us of Jesus' knowledge of us, should move us to adore Him, praise Him, love Him, trust Him, and follow Him in saving faith. Secondly, there is a 2nd certainty.

**GOD KNOWS WHICH KIND OF BELIEVING HE WILL NEVER ACCEPT AND ENTRUST HIMSELF TO SUCH BELIEVERS.** (II.) We read in John 2:24, "And Jesus, on His part, did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew all people." There is a kind of believing God does not accept, approve, or allow in those who claim to believe in Him. In these Passover Feast believers, Jesus saw into their hearts, and He saw something other than a saving faith that makes us children of God. Don't worry about

having the wrong faith if you are truly saved. John 1:12 tells us, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the sons/daughters of God, even to those who believe in His Name. It would seem that all this believing of the Passover Feast believers would have thrilled the heart of Jesus. It did not. If Jesus withholds His Holy Spirit from those who say they are believing in Him, then they are not His disciples. They are not His children. Not all faith is saving faith. Today, it would be better for any person here to come to terms with discovering their faith is not saving faith, than to wait until it is too late. Our text in John 2:23 tells us the weakness and futility of their faith. We read, “Many believed in His Name when they saw the signs He was doing. Today, in America, many people run from one church to another seeking for signs and wonders. There is a craving for the spectacular, to observe a sign-worker, or they seek a place where they can receive glory from another. Jesus said in John 5:44, “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” Jesus said in Matthew 24:24, “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders.” Paul adds in II Thessalonians 2:9-10 that as we near the time of the great tribulation, “The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders.”

Jesus did perform many signs, wonders, and miracles. They were astonishing happenings leaving people gasping in surprise. He mended broken limbs, He cast out demons, and He raised the dead to life. But Jesus’ miracles had another dimension that brings saving faith. Jesus’ miracles are signs revealing who He is, in His glory, signs revealing His love, and the character of His love, grace, and mercy. Faith may be kindled by the observance of a sign, but no saving faith is based on signs alone. Signs never create faith. That is the job of the Holy Spirit. Signs can strengthen saving faith and foster the growth of true faith. What does it mean in John 2: 24, that “Jesus, on His part, did not entrust Himself to them.”? What happens when we are born again, regenerated, and receive saving faith. I Corinthians 12:13 tells us, “For in One Spirit, we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all (such believers) were made to drink of One Spirit.” Paul adds in Romans 8:16,17 “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Beloved, all true believers are led by the Spirit of God. That is how Jesus entrusts us with Himself in making us His follows—not mere believers, but His followers, His disciples. We read in Romans 8:14-15, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God, are sons/daughters of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.” That day on Jesus first public sign by cleansing the temple, the multitudes were ecstatic, and had Jesus attempted a political revolt, they would doubtless have been all in. But Jesus knew their hearts. Had they heard what Jesus had to say about self-denial, and self-surrender in the face of daily temptations to disobey His will, they would have stared blankly at Him, and left Him like a shot if they heard Him speak about taking up their cross to follow Him. The little word, “all” in John 2: 24 means that among those Passover Feast believers not even one of them that He was willing to entrust Himself to. Jesus is not after enthusiastic fans by the thousands; He is looking for the saving faith of true followers. There is a third certainty of God’s glory that applies to each of us here today.

### **GOD KNOWS WHICH ONES OF US DO AND DO NOT HAVE SAVING FAITH.**

(III.) We read in John 2:25, “And (He) needed no one to bear witness about man, for He Himself knew what was in man.” God knows which of us have His love of the truth of

His Word. Again, as we think of God's glory, and His glorious omniscience, we need to revisit John 1:14. We read, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us; and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus knows which ones of us say, "Lord, Lord, but we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven because we refuse, Matthew 7:21-23 refuse to do the will of the Father. Non-saving faith can and will do signs and wonders in Jesus' name and miss heaven. We read, "Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. On that day, many will say to Me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and do many miracles in Your Name? And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of iniquity/lawlessness."

The glorified Savior sees to the bottom of each of our hearts today. He detects every superficial confession, and every trace of indifference and hostility. He knows the difference between a sincere fan with false hopes and non-saving faith, and a true follower with the blessed hope and a vibrant saving faith. Saving faith Jesus knows is what He sees in broken, repentant hearts. Isaiah 66:2 defines saving faith. "But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and (who) trembles at My word." God will help every true believer with saving faith to send our roots of faith, deep into His Word. Saving faith is not shallow commitment. For those of us with saving faith, the cross of Christ is Jesus' greatest glory, and our greatest glory. Paul wrote in Galatians 6: 14-16, "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world...For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God." Jesus' glory is such that He knows who truly believes. He is not afraid to confront us on what kind of faith we have. He knows that unless our faith is made to rest in Himself alone, it will not endure.

If we are true believers, we are holding on to Jesus, believing in His death, burial, and resurrection, and we are followers who are denying ourselves, and our own desires, and rather taking up our cross to follow Jesus. Jesus said in John 6: 37, "All that the Father gives me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me, I will never cast out." Paul called the church in Corinth, to the test, as I call us all today here in RSEFC. Paul's test is found in II Corinthians 13:5, saying, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed you fail to meet the test." Turn with me in closing to John 4:46-54. In days to come we will preach this story. My hope and prayer today is that every last one of you who profess faith in Jesus have true saving faith, believing in Him and in His Word, but if you do not, don't put off the wooing of God's Spirit. Come to the Savior today. I close with the words of the old Gospel hymn, "Come to the Savior, accept His sweet grace, When you were helpless, the Lord took your place, Paying the cost that you might be set free, Come to the Savior today."